

IN DEADLY PERIL  
By Florence L. Henderson

I was sorry, indeed, when Luigi Marevelli curtly informed me that my services were no longer required and I hope that some one else in that strange home that had been my abode for two months was also regretful. This was Miss Naomi Sterling.

She acted otherwise; in fact, distant, and I fancied an expression of distinct censure in her beautiful face. At all events, no opportunity was afforded me to fathom or explain. Her employer and my own had coldly handed me an envelope containing, as I knew, my week's salary, with the words:

"You can go at once."

And he added, a darkly suspicious and resentful look in his ever-restless, ever-probing eyes:

"And you need not refer to me."

Miss Sterling, who was the reading companion to his invalid wife, stood near by as he spoke. She had directed a searching look at me. Then she dropped her eyes. I saw a tear fall. Then, there being nothing more to say, I bowed politely and left the house.

I need not have been surprised at the action of Marevelli, for he was ever an autocratic, eccentric old man. He was of Italian-French extraction, had inherited a fortune and had given his life to study along artistic and scientific lines. He had whole cabinets stored with curios, and a magnificent library. I had been employed to catalogue all of those, besides acting as his secretary. The mien of my employer and the general atmosphere of the dull old house were gloomy and unfriendly alike. My labor was light and congenial, however, and then again I was occasionally thrown into the company of Miss Sterling.

I cannot describe the rare dream of grace and beauty that drew me

under the influence of this peerless creature. She was mostly in the rooms of the invalid mistress, and there was little opportunity for more than a casual greeting, or a few words exchanged at the table. There was a walled garden, however, and I managed to stroll there whenever I saw Naomi among the flowers and shrubs.

Twice I spent a delightful half hour with her. I felt after those occa-



Some One Came Down the Stairs.

sions fully impressed with the hope, nay, the conviction, that she read my love for her clearly. A fluttering emotion which she had betrayed had given me hope. One day she gave me a rose from her bosom and blushed and moved away quickly. I determined upon a confession of love the next evening, but before the day was over I was summarily dis-